



Andrew RT Davies

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8th February 2024

Dear Andrew,

Please find below the answer to your Written Questions:

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): What assessment has the Minister made of the findings of the impact assessment on the Welsh Government's Sustainable Farming Scheme proposals, that was commissioned by the Welsh Government? (WQ90763)

Will the Minister confirm whether the latest Welsh Government budget for rural affairs will be reviewed, following the findings of the Sustainable Farming Scheme impact assessment which has predicted a £125 million hit to sector output and an 11 per cent cut to labour on Welsh farms? (WQ90764)

Will the Minister confirm the Welsh Government's current working prediction for how many farmers will participate in the Sustainable Farming Scheme, given that the Welsh Government-commissioned impact assessment on the scheme worked on the estimation that 100 per cent of Welsh farmers would participate? (WQ90765)

Will the Minister confirm whether the Welsh Government is open to fundamental reforms of the proposals for the Sustainable Farming Scheme, following the conclusion of the current phase of consultation in light of the findings of the impact assessment on the scheme commissioned by the Welsh Government? (WQ90766)

Will the Minister confirm whether it is the Welsh Government's position that economic sustainability is as much a priority as environmental sustainability, following the findings of the Welsh Government-commissioned impact assessment of the Sustainable Farming Scheme? (WQ90769)

Lesley Griffiths:

WQ90763: The economic assessment commissioned by us, has helped inform the design of the proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme and related Consultation.

It is not an assessment of the current Consultation content or of the Scheme which will start in 2025. The Assessment will be updated following the consultation to support my final decision on the Scheme details.

WQ90764: While setting the budget for 2024/25, I prioritised key requests from farmers and their representatives, such as maintaining BPS at £238m, providing contracts to all eligible applicants for the Habitat Wales Scheme, introducing a scheme for organic farmers, and safeguarding the existing scheme delivery. The economic analysis for the Sustainable Farming Scheme was developed to shape the policy and design but does not represent the ongoing Consultation or the final Scheme.

Future budget considerations for the Sustainable Farming Scheme will be part of the decision-making process for its implementation. This decision will follow an assessment of consultation outputs and various evidence, including an updated economic analysis and the total budget allocated by the UK Government in the next spending review.

WQ90765: My intention is to design a scheme suitable for all sectors and farm types such that they can join the scheme from 2025. There are currently around 16,000 businesses claiming Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), with many more Welsh farm businesses ineligible or choosing not to claim BPS.

Participating in the Sustainable Farming Scheme is a voluntary choice, so farmers can join from 2025 or choose to join at a later date if they wish.

WQ90766: The scheme proposals in the Consultation have undergone modifications due to the economic assessment, three consultations, an outline scheme, and two phases of co-design. Through these processes, we have refined the scheme design based on extensive engagement and input from farmers and the broader industry. The proposals will evolve following the current Consultation and additional evidence such as an updated economic analysis.

WQ90769: The Agriculture Act and the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Objectives within it, provide a clear framework for the design of future farm support. Adopting this approach seeks to ensure the economic, environmental, cultural and social outcomes from sustainable land management practice can be delivered for the long-term benefit of farmers and the people of Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd